

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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R 121720Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0455

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

FAA BRUSSELS

USDOC WASHDC

SECDEF WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN GERMANY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG

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BEIRUT FOR RCAA - USDOC FOR MEPD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR BEXP GR

SUBJECT: ATHENS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT ELLINIKON TO BE RELOCATED

REF: ATHENS A-35, 2/4/74; ATHENS 4585, 7/18/74.

1. TOP-LEVEL GOG COMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY PRIME MINISTER, REACHED DECISION IN PRINCIPLE ON SEPTEMBER 10 IN CONNECTION WITH THE LOCATION OF ATHENS AIRPORT. TO MEET INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION REQUIREMENTS AFTER 1980; THE COMMITTEE IS REPORTED TO HAVE DECIDED TO REMOVE ATHENS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT FROM ELLINIKON. PREFERRED NEW SITE IS NEAR MEGARA (PAHI), APPROXIMATELY 35 KILOMETERS WEST OF ATHENS ALONG COAST OF SARONIKOS GULF.

2. ACCORDING TO ANNOUNCEMENT, GOG WILL ORDER FEASIBILITY
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STUDIES (BY FOREIGN EXPERTS) SIMULTANEOUSLY FOR MEGARA SITE

AND FOR SECOND CHOICE, A SITE NEAR SPATA. SPATA IS APPROXIMATELY 25 KILOMETERS NORTHWEST OF ATHENS. THIS IS BEING DONE SO THAT INCASE SITE NEAR MEGARA PROVES UNSUITABLE (SOME DOUBT EXISTS AS TO WHETHER THERE IS SPACE FOR THE TWO PARALLEL RUNWAYS WHICH ARE REQUIRED), GOG WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE AHEAD IMMEDIATELY WITH AN ALTERNATIVE SITE.

3. A FIRST STEP, ACCORDING TO REPORTS ON THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION, WILL BE TO MOVE THE MILITARY AIR BASE AND THE STATE AIRCRAFT FACTORY, PRESENTLY LOCATED ON ELLINIKON AIRPORT, ELSEWHERE. SUCH MOVES WILL REPORTEDLY INCREASE LANDING AND TAKE-OFF CAPACITY AT THE AIRPORT FOR CIVIL AIRCRAFT BY ABOUT 20 PERCENT DURING THE INTERIM PERIOD BEFORE THE AIRPORT IS MOVED TO ITS NEW SITE. HOWEVER, NO TIMETABLE HAS BEEN SET FOR ANY OF THESE MOVES.

4. FINANCING OF NEW AIRPORT WOULD BE THROUGH THE EXPLOITATION (SIC) OF LAND A PRESENT AIRPORT AT ELLINIKON.

5. COMMENT: DISPUTE OVER FUTURE LOCATION OF ATHENS AIRPORT HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR YEARS. (SEE REFERENCED MESSAGES). IN RECENT MONTHS, THERE HAS BEEN INCREASING AGITATION FOR REMOVAL OF AIRPORT AMONG RESIDENTS OF GLYFADA (SEASIDE RESORT NEAR PRESENT AIRPORT), WHO APPEAR TO HAVE WON THIS ROUND. CAA'S PLAN TO PUT PARALLEL RUNWAY INTO SEA AT ELLINIKON TO REDUCE NOISE WAS REJECTED BECAUSE THIS ALTERNATIVE WOULD ALLEGEDLY SPOIL THE BEACHES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE LAST WORD HAS BEEN HEARD. BOTH MEGARA AND SPATA HAVE SEIOUS DISADVANTAGES. (MEGARA: ELEVSIS AIR BASE WOULD HAVE TO BE ABANDONED, SERIOUS NAVIGATIONAL HAZARDS REMAIN AND, BECAUSE OF TRAFFIC CONGESTION, GROUND TRANSPORTATION REQUIRES ONE HOUR TO REACH THE CENTER OF ATHENS. SPATA: LOCAL POPULATION IS AT LEAST AS VOCIFEROUS AS GLYFADA'S IN NOT WANTING AIRPORT, OCCASIONAL GROUND FOG, AND SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF EARTHMOVING NECESSARY TO CLEAR OBSTRUCTIONS). OLYMPIC OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFF THAT OLYMPIC WAS NOT CONSULTED ABOUT THIS DECISION AND THAT OLYMPIC WOULD BE MOST UNHAPPY TO MOVE.

6. EMBASSY HAS NOT YET BEEN ABLE OBTAIN CLEAR ASSESSMENT OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOG INTENTION, AS THIS DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN AT HIGHEST LEVEL AND HAS NOT YET BEEN WORKED OUT IN DETAIL. AS IT APPEARS TO EMBASSY, NOT MUCH CAPACITY WOULD BE GAINED AT ELLINIKON BY ELIMINATION OF GREEK AND U.S. MILITARY TRAFFIC, CERTAINLY FAR LESS THAN THE 20 PERCENT ASSERTED IN GOG ANNOUNCEMENT. SUCH A STEP, EVEN IF IMPLEMENTED, WOULD APPEAR TO BE AT LEAST 2-5 YEARS IN THE FUTURE. (WE ANTICIPATE THAT ANY EVENTUAL IMPACT OF THIS DECISION ON

U.S. PRESENCE WILL BE SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION DURING
NEGOTIATIONS ON U.S. AIR BASE, SCHEDULED TO BEGIN OCTOBER 1.)

7. FOR MEPD: EMBASSY WILL FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS TO SEE
WHETHER OPPORTUNITY EXISTS FOR U.S. CONTRACTOR IN PREPARING
FEASIBILITY STUDIES.
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